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“Don’t Drop The Ball” PSA Promotes Responsible Fatherhood *~ Virginia Tech Coach Frank Beamer and University of Virginia Coach Mike London Team Up To Raise Awareness ~*

RICHMOND – “Your presence as a father makes all the difference.” That’s the focus of the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) new public service announcement (PSA) that launched on November 20, 2011 and will run through December 5. The PSA is part of a system-wide initiative to strengthen families at every point of client contact and features Virginia Tech Coach Frank Beamer and University of Virginia Coach Mike London raising awareness on the importance fatherhood.

“Fathers play a unique and irreplaceable role in raising their kids,” said VDSS Commissioner Martin D. Brown. “We know that involved dads help kids lead lives that are happier and healthier. Connecting and reconnecting fathers with their children is one of three primary goals outlined in our [Strengthening Families Initiative](#) (SFI).”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, an estimated 24 million children in the U.S. live apart from their fathers. Here in Virginia, nearly 30 percent of children under 18 are living in single-parent families.

“The parallel I see between coaching and being a father is the young people coming to you needing guidance,” said University of Virginia Coach Mike London. “They see that if you care about them – there are answers – there is hope for whatever they may be dealing with.”

“Your presence makes all the difference in the world,” said Virginia Tech Coach Frank Beamer. “Be the person, be the father that you want to be.”

According to the [National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse](#) (NRFC), children who live without their biological fathers are more likely to experience educational, health, emotional and behavioral problems, to be victims of child abuse and to engage in criminal behavior than their peers who live with their married, biological (or adoptive) parents. As a result, this initiative focuses on a holistic approach that strengthens the family unit as a whole and emphasizes the critical importance of responsible fatherhood.

The “Don’t Drop The Ball” PSA will be carried statewide on multiple stations over the course of the next two week and during the upcoming football game between the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech scheduled to air on Saturday, November 26.

To view the PSA or to learn more about the VDSS SFI, visit www.dss.virginia.gov/about/sfi/index.cgi.

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